

Original Paper

Nationally Recognized Open Door Model

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Abstract

The White House brochure during a US Presidential Award ceremony stated of Oppenheimer: "He has developed an open door model that encourages students of all economic strata and ethnic groups to participate in his research."

The national recognition noted in the title of this paper included:

- 1) a US Presidential Award for science research mentoring, a White House program administered by the National Science Foundation. The White House brochure said that Oppenheimer's philosophy was that all interested students should be given the opportunity to do research.*

Research should not be reserved for the elite.

- 2) election as a Fellow of the American Association for the advancement of science (AAAS). A Fellow of the AAAS is defined as a Member whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its application are scientifically or socially distinguished. Specifically of Oppenheimer as a AAAS Fellow it noted for studies on cell surface carbohydrates in morphogenesis and malignancy. And also for award winning programs that bring advances in science to the student*
- 3) statewide Trustees Outstanding Professor Award of the 500,000 student California State University system (largest public university system in the United States). Two of about 20,000 faculty are selected for this highest system wide award each year.*

These honors resulted from an open door student research program, student career outcomes, student co-authored publications and 14 textbooks/textbook editions. Most of all Oppenheimer's enthusiasm, energy and humor were instrumental in this success. This program is replicable for those with the energy, enthusiasm and motivation to work with many research students. This paper will explore all the components of this program (Note 1-94).

1. Introduction

Most professors work with small numbers of students because their research systems don't lend themselves to a lab with large numbers of students. This is because of safety issues and a high degree of complexity. And most faculty are not motivated to serve many research students.

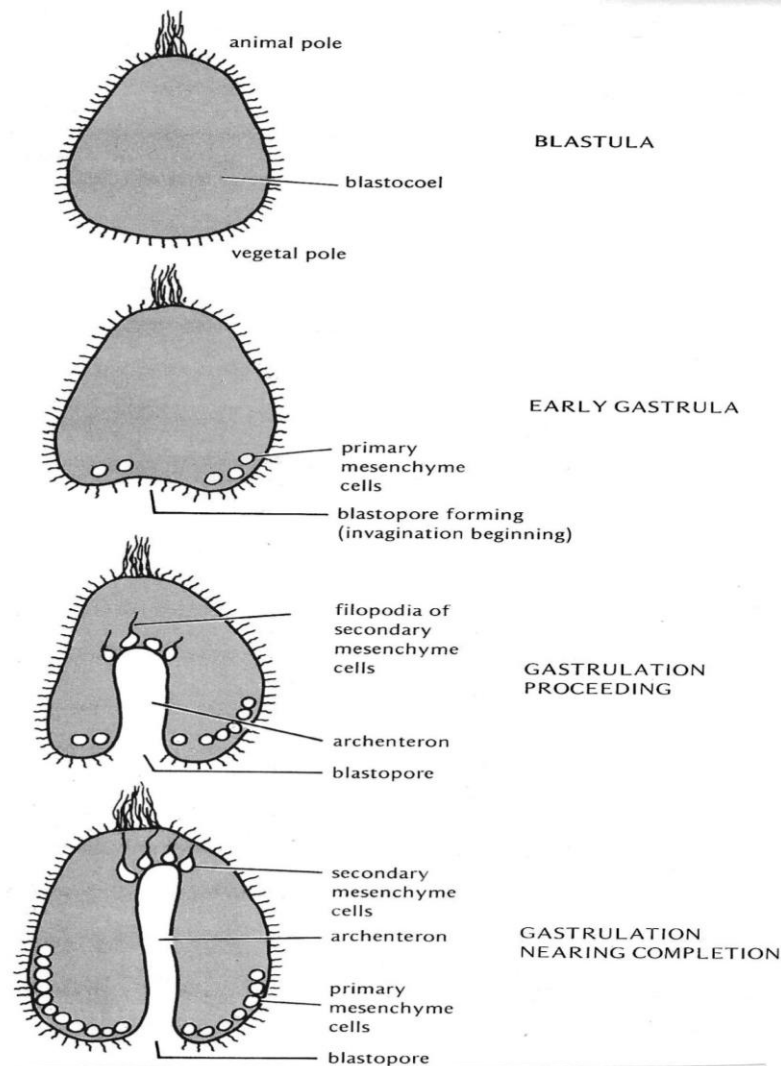
In the Presidential Award review one reviewer said...He (Oppenheimer) calls his students doctors or professors...I think (the reviewer) I'll try that. Oppenheimer's philosophy is that all interested students should be given an opportunity to do research (Note 91).

2. The Experimental Systems

We work with the sea urchin embryo and mouse teratocarcinoma cells. Let's first look at the sea urchin embryo system that provided the research that played a key role in the awards and honors noted. Why is the sea urchin such a good system to work with? It has been cited as a model system by the National Institutes of Health. It is easy to work with by hundreds of students and therefore is a key component of the open door policy.

Over a 50 year period at Cal State Northridge, we developed a marine aquarium lab that housed hundreds of sea urchins in refrigerated aquaria. One can even maintain sea urchins in a refrigerated aquarium in an old refrigerator and there are many ways to do it. We are able to keep fertile sea urchins all year because different species are "ripe" with gametes during each season of the year. It is not only the sea urchins that attract many students to the Oppenheimer lab. It is enthusiasm, energy and motivation to serve many students at one time. As all awarding organizations noted, it is Oppenheimer's enthusiasm, motivation and energy that is responsible for this record of accomplishment. But without an easy to use system with simple experiments, the numbers of participating students would be less.

The figure shows the sea urchin embryo system and the main components of this system that we work with for half a century. The figure shows the hollow ball stage (blastula) as it begins to change form (gastrulates). As can be seen the primary mesenchyme cells move into the hollow ball center (blastocoel) as the embryo begins to invaginate. Cells at the inner tip of the invagination (archenteron) form projections called filopodia that attach to the roof of the blastocoel. This attachment is a focus of our award-winning program that started over 50 years ago. Other systems will be described later.



Sea Urchin Embryo. From Oppenheimer, S., Introduction to Embryonic Development Allyn and Bacon, 1980, Boston, p. 86. After Gustafson

3. The Research

The election as Fellow of the AAAS, cited Oppenheimer's research findings on involvement of carbohydrates in development and cancer as well as his work with students as reasons for this honor.

It all began with the mentoring by Saul Roseman, a giant in carbohydrate biochemistry, at Johns Hopkins, during Oppenheimer's graduate student days (1968-1970). He found Oppenheimer's initial findings, that only one component (L-glutamine) of a complex medium (medium 199), caused mouse teratocarcinoma cells to adhere to each other, to be exciting. Many experiments showed that glutamine donated an amino group to fructose-6-phosphate forming glucosamine-6-phosphate, the key intermediate in the synthesis of cell surface sugar-containing molecules (Note 88).

After leaving Johns Hopkins with a Ph.D. degree, Oppenheimer did an American Cancer Society Postdoctoral Fellowship at University of California, San Diego, with Tom Humphreys and found that the

solution bathing the mouse teratocarcinoma cells contained a component that caused the cells to adhere (Note 87).

4. Open Door Program

Coming to Cal State Northridge in 1971, we continued the work on the teratocarcinoma cell adhesion component with many students participating in the research (Note 90).

This component had functional carbohydrate in its adhesion promoting activity (Note 81). We found that the enzyme that synthesizes L-glutamine (glutamine synthetase) was associated with increased adhesiveness of the teratocarcinoma cells in culture (Note 79). When protease inhibitors were added to the cancer cells their behavioral properties improved (Note 65). Proteases help cancer cells invade other tissues. We found that the mouse teratocarcinoma cells were not the only cells that included functional adhesion-promoting carbohydrate. Chick embryo cells also did (Note 84).

With hundreds of students participating in the research, we examined the role of sugars in the binding of cells at the tip of the sea urchin embryo archenteron to the blastocoel roof as shown in the figure. Specifically, L-rhamnose, polyglucans, hyalin, cyclodextrin, mannose-containing molecules, all involved with carbohydrates, appeared to be involved in adhesive interactions in the sea urchin embryo (Notes 31, 34, 35, 66, 72, 48). An examination of the titles of the papers in the notes listing will show which sugars were studied and which students were involved in the studies. Purified glycosidases (carbohydrate degrading enzymes) inhibited the adhesion of the archenteron tip to the blastocoel roof (Note 21) and sugar-binding lectins bound to the cellular interaction under study.

One of our most interesting findings was that large molecules could enter the sea urchin blastocoel without microinjection (Note 39, Note 52) allowing easy probing of cellular interactions (Note 39, Note 52). Two papers, one in SCIENCE and one in NATURE examined carbohydrate-containing lectin receptors on the surfaces of sea urchin embryo cells, showing that the two top journals in the world had interest in the sea urchin embryo and cell surface carbohydrate-containing molecules. About 100 students were involved in this sea urchin research (Notes 1-94).

Perhaps important in the award of the mentioned honors is that this research was simple and often consisted in the addition of purified reagents to developing sea urchin embryos. This attracted many students. To maintain a large open door program both enough space and help from more advanced students are essential. The Department of Biology helped with the space and the enrollments of large numbers of students who get credit for doing research. And Oppenheimer is provided with teaching credit for handling many research students. Such arrangements can only be done on an individual basis. But I have learned that departments pay attention to results. Large numbers of student co-authorships help a department realize how resources should be allocated. Advanced students help train new students so many more students can be served.

The books Oppenheimer wrote or in a couple of cases co-authored, that may have helped in the statewide Trustees Outstanding Professor Award included:

4 editions of Introduction to Embryonic Development plus an instructors' manual and an Italian Edition, 4 editions of Cancer a Biological and Clinical Introduction, Cancer Prevention Guidebook, Atlas of Embryonic Development. And 25 annual editions of the New Journal of Student Research abstracts possibly helped in honors from the State of California, and AAAS, showing the K-12 involvement of my work (Note 2).

5. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Carolyn Oppenheimer for outstanding formatting work and thanks to my colleagues and the CSUN leadership for over 50 years of support.

6. Conclusions

This open door program garnered 2 national honors (AAAS Fellow and US Presidential Award) and a statewide honor (Trustees Outstanding Professor Award of the CSU system). Here I review some of the student co-authored publications, student career outcomes and the qualities of the experimental systems used, in a program based on the philosophy that all interested students should be offered a chance to get involved in research. Research is not just for the elite. Simple experimental systems with easy to manipulate procedures are presented to help attract students. But as stated in the White House brochure, the key to success is the motivation, enthusiasm and boundless energy of Oppenheimer. This program is replicable by those whose primary goal is to open up their laboratories to all interested students.

These are some of the mostly student co-authored publications that may have helped lead to the AAAS Fellow designation, U.S. Presidential Award and CSU system statewide Outstanding Professor Award.

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- Note 83. K. Krach, A. Green G. Nicolson, S. Oppenheimer Cell Surface Changes Occurring During Sea Urchin Embryonic Development Monitored by Quantitative Agglutination with Plant Lectins, Exp. Cell Res., 84, pp. 191-198, 1974.
- Note 84. S. Oppenheimer Utilization of L-Glutamine in Intercellular Adhesion: Ascites Tumor and Embryonic Cells, Exp. Cell. Res., 77, pp. 175-182, 1983.
- Note 85. R. Potter M. Barber, S. Oppenheimer Alteration of Sea Urchin Embryo Cell Surface Properties by Mycostatin, a Sterol Binding Antibiotic, Developmental Biology, 33, pp. 218-223,
- Note 86. S. Oppenheimer J. Odencrantz ,A Quantitative Assay for Measuring Cell Agglutination: Agglutination of Sea Urchin Embryo and Mouse Teratoma Cells by Concanavalin A, Exp. Cell Res., 73, pp. 475-480, 1972.
- Note 87. S. Oppenheimer, T. Humphreys Isolation of Specific Macromolecules Required for Adhesion of Mouse Tumor Cells, Nature, 232, pp. 125-127, 1971.
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Note 89. S.Oppenheimer, Motivating College Students: Evidence from 20 years of Anonymous Student Evaluations, Higher Education Research, doi: 10.11648 (2019).

Please Note: Most of the co-authors on these papers are students. These are only the full length peer-reviewed papers from the Oppenheimer lab. Published abstracts and national presentations are not included.

Note 90. S. Oppenheimer, Lab Training: Undergraduate Research in Action, Nature 519, 158 [2015].

Note 91. S.Oppenheimer, Include Mentoring Skills in Hiring and Promotion Criteria, Nature 554, 31 (2018).

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Note 94. Oppenheimer, S., University on the Rise without Ph.D. Students, Nature 538: 171 (2016).

These are some of the student career outcomes that may have helped lead to the AAAS Fellow election, US Presidential Award and CSU system statewide Outstanding Professor Award. * denotes completed the Masters degree with Steve. Some duplication may be inadvertently included.

John Scordato, Ph.D. USC *

Paul Aunchman, Environmental Pollution , Health Inspector *

Bill Childress, ran computer firm *

Chris Capelle, M.D. *

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Bill Saxton, Ph.D. U Colorado, Professor *

Peter Thompson, M.D. *.

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Marci Spiegler, Community College Instructor *

Mohsen Saidinejad, Ph.D. pgm *

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Ani Issaian, Cal Tech Electron Microscopy Facility Director *

Ron Roque, Pollution Inspector, City of Los Angeles *

Pat Krueger, U.S. Forest Service Scientist *

Valerie Dunn, Research Scientist, Industry *

Michael Daily, M.D. *

Brian Salbilla, Research Associate? *

Norman Lautsch, Research Associate ? *

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Anush Margarian, Pharmacy School
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Richard Karout, Pharmacy school
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Mona Kelvani, admitted to pharmacy school
Carol Chavez, accepted Roseman Dental School, Utah
Nomiki Kolettis, Research Associate Genentech
Anasheh Ghazarian, Los Angeles County Sheriff's
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Destinney Cox, accepted CSUN Biology Masters
M. Larijani, emergency room physician
Alice Chalikian Kouyoumdjian, Chiropractor
Sayeh Behnia, admitted to pharmacy school
Mai Phan, Career Protein Chemist*
Jim Bollinger, Dentist
Christina Irikyan, clinical laboratory scientist
Jouliana Davoudi, Dentist, graduated from USC
Dental School*
Bermans Iskandar, pediatric neurosurgeon, University of Wisconsin
John Sobhani, admitted USC Dental School
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Salmeen Andkhoy, registered nurse
Stacy Tanaka, teacher, Magnet Coordinator, new Medical Magnet at Northridge Middle School.
Jasper Chang, Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy
Karen Pastrano, accepted UC San Francisco and Pittsburgh Schools of Dentistry and Pittsburgh Ph.D.
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Jenieke Allen, Ph.D. *
Justin Dreyfuss admitted Rosalind Franklin, Medical School*
Massoud Agahi, M.D. Vascular Surgeon
Maribel Alvarez, Ph.D
Celina Barba, M.D., Stanford, Co-director Emergency Medicine, Providence St. Joseph Medical Center
Burbank, Scholarship donor to CSUN in honor of Dr. Oppenheimer
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Dayana Tobar, Ventura County Medical Center Residency Program
Karoline Rostamiani, tenure track community college professor
Yun Lee, accepted to pharmacy school
Karoline Rostamiani, tenure track community college professor
Carol Chavez, DMD, Roseman University College of Dental Medicine
Kristel Crocker, Accepted into Clinical Laboratory Scientist Training Program
Byron Aquino, Accepted into Clinical Laboratory Scientist Training Program

Regie Canta, Accepted into Clinical Laboratory Science Program

Dominique Evans-Bye, U.S. Presidential Award recipient, high school teacher and
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Arya Saleh, M.D., Internal medicine

Peyman Saadat, M.D., reproductive endocrinologist